



Ann Cotten

Letter from the Iron Matriarchy

Abstract: A disillusioned guerrilla tries to describe the situation on Earth to an old friend who is considering remigration from Mars. Unsurprisingly, structural problems of a real existing queer feminism are a key topic.

My dear on Mars,

I wish you were close,
but I can't wish you were here. I wish we could meet in the last place we parted, at the farewell café at the boarding station in Arizona with its neogalalith booth walls. It is now in ruins, I have seen pictures, the first test site of tectonic war. There is an urban myth that when the highrise crumbled, some guests in the café survived by melting the galalith back into whey, but thinking about it I can't imagine it working.

I was glad to hear of your hydroponic sausages,
sad to hear of the passing of your companion, whom I met only briefly.

So to answer your question. If you wanted and found the funds to come back, somehow, I would welcome you and do my best to help you find your legs. My house is a coming and going and you are welcome to join this flux. I don't know if it will be your comfort zone, but it surely will work as a base from which to find a place that suits your way. I belong to the elite here, which means that my project makes sure I am in the most dangerous places regularly and get the training to deal with it. I may disappear any time, but you are not getting me off my hydrogen bike. If you like, I can write you into the list of parties to whom packages of my duties-cum-privileges are offered when I disappear. If you are interested, we can talk in detail.

To be quite honest, though, the price of getting here, based on the rumors I've heard, seems like it would be better invested in changing something other than your position in the cosmos. There are so many things worth changing here that I honestly believe you would regret having spent the tokens on coming. But let me tell you a bit about the situation.

Children are fewer in the former "developed nations." This is a good thing for the globe, but of course, the growth-based



economy has been having to adapt and there are plenty of parties who would rather pressure women than change themselves or their immigration policies and spending on education. Because it's true we need staff to maintain the machines that were always supposed to lower the workload, but ended up inventing new necessities.

Can you believe that TV still exists? It is used for fortune telling in bizarre rituals. People make offerings, the routers are always dripping with food juices and when pictures turn up, they are interpreted as signs from the gods. That is on the ground floor of society. On the top floors, conservative lazy thinkers have allied with religious monotheistic groups to spread myths. Grassroots queer feminist groups have become the carriers of progressive thinking. We build systems of respect, equal chances and education. But we are told that education is a form of repression, that advocates of education don't understand the natural genius of children. The speakers themselves seem like adult children, products of generations of early reproducers. But there are plenty of *Überläufernnnie*. The queer flok swells.

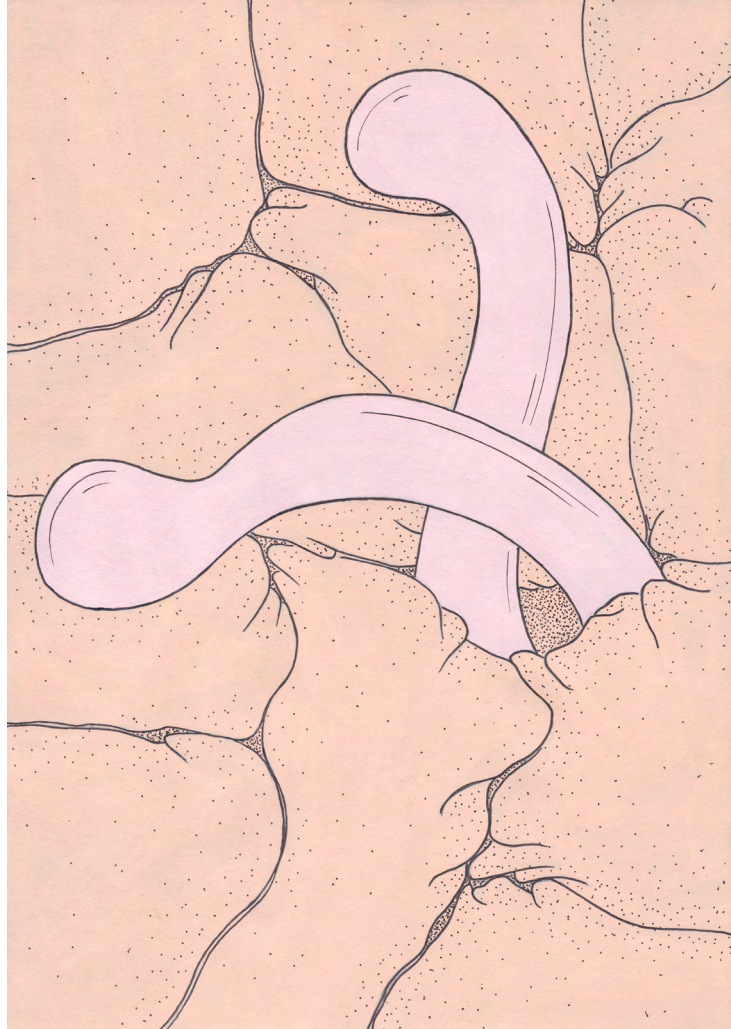
The educators' unions formed a political party shortly before the implosion of democracy, but unfortunately ended up campaigning against radical environmentalists who had allied with World Islam. Queer feminist advocacy of education was associated with the European enlightenment, which was seen as a set of myths developed to support colonialism and white supremacy. Values we claim are universal, like transparency and access to knowledge, skepticism, radical equality, sovereignty over one's own body and respect of the sovereignty of others over theirs, have been criticized for not respecting religion and for being unlocal. I would agree with much of this, but right-wing myth-sling has jumped on this, like on anything they think they can use. The match will not be decided on paper. In any case ninja girls' schools train warrior scholars as a secret elite.

On the other hand, we have successfully regressed so that we cannot cook or perform the social tasks that had been such a potent means of our oppression. This means we are dependent on affectionate boychildren. Somehow this behaviour emerged from a largely male demography in migrant populations resulting in biogender imbalances and selection processes. But they are not always reliable because they tend to fall back into ultra-misogynist ways of thinking, precisely because of their dependent status. The good thing that has come out of this is that in the absence of sexual charm, in both directions, truly diplomatic relations ensue. The bad thing is the lying, and the combinations of acceptance, violence and co-dependency.

Despite the engagement of movements to bridge the gap between classes, most of the discourses helped to make the gap a cultural as well as an economic one. Whoever can afford to avoids the caustic, repetitive way of speaking that is the style of the



monotheistic lower classes, and acoustically suggests the handling of unprivilegedness like a kind of military tank that is a depressing but enlivening sofa for its inhabitants. If you are used to it, you hear the music, the subtle nuances, fine manoeuvres; if it is fresh to your ear, you feel battered as if by waves of bile. Bible. Babble.



It is essential to be bilingual and fluent in this sociolect, though, if you want to have any influence in the monotheistic classes. You have to be able to say “BMW” in twenty different intonations, make it mean “I love you.” You have to be able and willing to cake make-up on your face to the point that it looks like cosmetic surgery, and value the joke this is higher than the discomfort and waste of time. Your time, in other words, must be sheer and endless like your hair. You must feel yours is a wasted life from the beginning, that your freedom lies in reclaiming this wasting of your life. Ambitions must be harbored secretly. No airing until it is done. Here we get to the ninja schools. Proletkult, on the last risograph, made a funny attempt to formalize this aesthetic. They wrote a coursebook to teach the upper classes the language. I attach.

I personally have been working* as part of the contraception squad, a stealth troop with the goal of convincing brainwashed women to overcome the superstitions of the war-baby-feeding



monotheisms they are surrounded by and make use of their freedom. We make prude-looking women-only hang-out spaces and try to make them hip in these communities, but subtly smuggle in openings, gaps, winks, recording studios—and discrete access to contraceptive methods. You can get a copper coil in the basement, that's not the problem, but one needs to motivate and encourage the girls not to feel that their value depends on care work and reproduction. As friendships grow, the projects get independent. Some have gone rotten by our standards but are flourishing as religious women's centers. Many are mixed.

Most important is the contraceptive contraband. We work together with the cocaine network, although it is the worst, but we wouldn't have been able to do an autonomous stealth operation without their cooperation or at least complicity. This way, we help each other. I think most of the dealers are melancholy about the white fingers of debility they pump with their engagement. They build a lot of useless fathers and mothers. So helping us launders their souls. And to be honest, their ware has also been a useful tool in seducing girls away from what they have been taught is the proper path, initiating them into other kinds of fun, where you know your life because you put it at stake.

Our goal is to approach a global reproductive strike. Based on the recognition that the bastards at the handles of the leverage have unabashedly inherited the conception that humans are human resources, that lower classes breed to provide labor force and food for wars. And the more women produce, the more the children are uneducated. They feel they are enough as they are, they are treasures—and in a way that is indeed a treasure the upper classes don't understand. But education is indispensable to understanding an industrialized, digitalized, globalized world. The kids educate themselves in a way, but in the mythologies of the scrap-metal scavengers and cityscape-dreamy kick-roller-gangs. They and their mothers are staunch at not listening. The mothers close their eyes to the fact that they are funded by the dealing of children who are sold as slaves.

As an organization we have an ambiguous relation with the Mothers. Where they stop thinking, we carry on. Our latest coup, with Mother funding, is a women's script, to be spread as a secret code. We have printed bibles, korans and torahs as well as a series of technical explanations and joke books. Included always is the reason not to teach it to a man, even when one is friends with him. I don't know if I agree with this segregation, but I count on people overstepping the rules. The texts of the religious books start like the originals, but soon veer off on very different routes. Absurd and verbose enough to seem unthreatening, the text itself is the message and implements the art of seduction. The message is: you can read already. Unlike the command "read" with which Allah is said to have passed the koran to Mohammed, these are many fingers and they point



in all directions. You are always already there. So stop shutting out everything. With the world as your ally, you needn't fear violence.

But there is violence. Illegitimate violence. Non-consensual violence. What to do?

We have pushed through in government a ritual that seems invasive at the beginning, but which we hope will end up saving lives from death and captivity: officers of the law regularly visit all dwellings and send everyone out into the street. Under the guise of earthquake drills. These officers have no other task or agenda, no further snooping to do. Their only task is to ensure the freedom of movement of everyone in the house. They read out the right of every human being to free movement, and require everyone in the house or apartment to go outside. They do check for hidden rooms and any signs of captivity. If they get the impression that someone lacks freedom, they pass lists of houses of refuge, which are also posted in public places and in the entryways of houses and circulated by us.

Poems have been written and are handed to fresh mothers: poems that acknowledge and respect the beauty of what they have done, but also recall how the whole world needs their own faces and minds and presence, not just their kids'. And they must not disappear into the care of their one baby and family. These are poems of longing, poems of respect and sadness. No one can say if they work, or backfire, or backfire and then unfold long-term influence. We send musicians, playlists, USB sticks and members to day care, preschool, kindergarten facilities. We have lobbied for more kindergarten facilities and programs to get women interested in other applications as well, to set themselves up on several feet.

So this all has happened, but you know, I hate the dynamics of the Mothers. I have never liked playing with girls, I'm not interested in their games. I don't like the segregation, I think it is dangerous. These fucking sects. And it is no fun when people are scared of you, though we have developed techniques. We know the make-up comeback was structurally a counter-measure to a tendency to be scared of girls who behave like normal people; we let it happen, in the name of control, but ignoring the power of statistics. Boys have reason to be afraid of women because they can make their phallus come and go, and therefore all the violence. I am afraid of the backlash, of escalating the violence, it is all terribly fragile. Honestly, the goal in my mind—which will never be reached—is for humanity to die out in its current form, as it seems to perpetuate all this misogyny precisely in its negative shape, I mean, admiring women for bullshit, which is manipulative, like commending slaves for submissiveness.

Ugh, I am tired.

Let me finish with a concrete tip. I'm sure it must be different in other galaxies.

Sects have become a serious financial alternative to state



currencies. You leave the system C of commodity exchange and enter a system A of familiar solidarity which includes local deities. You are required to give everything to the sect; but the sect provides for you without bounds, it works like a family. They are crazy, but legit as far as anything can be. Obviously you want to chose one that has a widespread network, or count on staying local.

Working means being in a community. You get fed and a place to stay and they will take care of you when you are ill and kill you fairly when you reach old age. You pick your community by your taste. Bigger ones may still have formal systems like credits and stuff, but they mess you in different ways, so a lot of people prefer a familiar mafia who share their style.

But I guess, darling, that is nothing new—

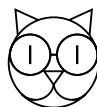
I look forward to, perhaps, seeing and embracing you.

Keep a straight heart!

Mamita

BIO

Ann Cotten studied German language and literature and since 2007 has made her living from publishing texts, translations and peripheral activities. Recently published: *Die Anleitungen der Vorfahren* (The Instructions of the Ancestors), edition suhrkamp, 2023.



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